



Interim Essential Industry Employer Guidance for Vaccinating North Carolinians

February 4, 2021

This document provides guidance for employers of frontline essential workers on how to prepare for their staff being vaccinated when North Carolina moves to Group 3. **As North Carolina moves into future groups and additional vaccine becomes available, this guidance will be updated to add information.**

Overview of North Carolina's COVID-19 Vaccine Plan

A tested, safe and effective vaccine will be available to all who want it, but supplies are limited for now. To save lives and slow the spread of COVID-19, independent state and federal public health advisory committees made recommendations for who to vaccinate first based on limited supplies of vaccine being available.

Our goal is to vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible. However, given the very limited supply of vaccines, many people who are eligible for vaccination may need to wait. North Carolina has prioritized vaccination in the following groups (see [infographic](#)). **Groups 1 and 2 are currently open for vaccination.** North Carolina will move next to Group 3, which includes frontline essential workers.

Currently, many individuals in Groups 1 and 2 are still waiting to be vaccinated. The timing of opening to Group 3 will depend on vaccine supply and demand for vaccines from individuals eligible in Groups 1 and 2. Because of limited vaccine supply, many frontline essential workers will need to wait for their vaccine appointment even when the state opens to Group 3.



Who is Eligible for Group 3?

When North Carolina moves to Group 3, frontline essential workers will be eligible to be vaccinated. Frontline Essential Workers are workers in 8 essential industry sectors (as recommended by a federal advisory committee), who are at substantially higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 because their work requires them to work indoors and/or in close contact with others. Specifically, the 8 essential sectors are Critical Manufacturing, Education, Essential Goods, Food & Agriculture, Government and Community Services, Health Care and Public Health, Public Safety, and Transportation.

Table 1

Critical Manufacturing	Education	Essential Goods	Food & Agriculture	Government and Community Services	Health Care and Public Health	Public Safety	Transportation
Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers manufacturing medical supplies, medical equipment or PPE Workers manufacturing products needed for food and agricultural supply chains 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care staff K-12 teachers and support staff College and university instructors and support staff 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers in stores that sell groceries and medicine 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meat packing workers Food processing workers Farmworkers Migrant farm/fishery workers Food distribution and supply chain workers Restaurant workers 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Postal Service Workers and other shipping workers Court workers Elected officials Clergy Homeless shelter staff 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public health workers Social workers 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Firefighters and EMS Law enforcement Corrections workers Security officers Public agency workers responding to abuse and neglect 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public transit workers Division of Motor Vehicles workers Transportation maintenance and repair technicians Workers supporting highway infrastructure

Employees that can answer yes to **both** questions below are considered frontline essential workers and will be eligible to receive their vaccination once North Carolina moves into Group 3.

- Is my place of employment one of the 8 essential sectors listed in Table 1 (critical manufacturing, education, essential goods, food & agriculture, government and community services, health care and public health, public safety and transportation)?
 - Please note if you think your job falls under one of the 8 essential industry sectors but do not see it listed above, you may still be eligible as a frontline essential worker. The list of professions in Table 1 are examples and is not the complete list of professions that may be considered frontline essential workers in [Group 3](#). For more information on the types of professions that are eligible in each of the 8 essential industry sectors, please reference the federal [CISA guidance](#).
 - Note: Employees in any sector in the CISA guidance that is not one of the 8 essential industry sectors listed in Table 1 (such as chemical and energy sectors) will be eligible for vaccination as part of [Group 4](#).
- Do I have to be in-person at my work site?

Very limited supply of vaccines will likely result in employers and employees needing to wait for their vaccine appointments, but everyone will have a chance to take their shot when their priority group is eligible.

Who is Eligible for Group 4?

The following groups of employees will be eligible for vaccination in Group 4:

- Employees who work in one of the 8 essential industry sectors listed above in Table 1, who **do not** have to be in-person at their work site are included in this group.
- Employees that work in additional sectors in the CISA guidance. Please review NCDHHS Deeper Dive for [Group 4](#), for a full list of essential worker sectors.

Note: Group 4 also includes individuals who are 16 to 64 years old with high-risk medical conditions that increase risk of severe disease from COVID-19 and individuals who are incarcerated or living in close group living settings (who are not already vaccinated due to age, medical condition, or job function).

How Employers Can Help

- 1. Encourage your frontline employees to get vaccinated when vaccine is available for them:** Identify the subset of your employees who must work onsite to do their job. Because of the high risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread of the illness among these frontline workers due to their constant close contact with others, it is extremely important to encourage frontline essential workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccination to protect their health. One of the key actions employers can take is to share information that the vaccine is safe and effective.

Additionally, employees can talk to your employees about the importance of the vaccine for their own health and the health of their families and communities. Frontline essential employees' work is critical to the infrastructure of our society and puts the employees at increased risk of exposure. Vaccine information should be given to employees in their [native languages](#), whenever possible, using clear language and trusted means of communication.

Leaders and employees in your company can attend a vaccine 101 presentation so that they can help direct employees to trusted sources of information. Please submit a request using [NCDHHS's form](#) if your company/organization is interested in helping to organize a vaccine 101 presentation led by NCDHHS presenters.

Potential ways to educate your employees about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Send employee letters, text messages or email blasts (see template responses at the end of the document below)
- Review and share CDC's COVID-19 Communication [Toolkit](#) for Essential Workers for additional resources and materials
- Schedule meetings with team members that share a common native language to learn about the vaccine plan
- Display posters and other printed materials in places where most workers frequent
- Post vaccine information on your company's social media or worksite television monitors
- Partner with trusted community leaders to promote getting your vaccine when it's your turn
- Visit the [CDC guidance](#) for non-healthcare critical infrastructure employers for more tips!

Resources to share with your employees about the COVID-19 vaccine:

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- NCDHHS COVID-19 vaccination webpage:
- Flyers, fact sheets, social graphics from our Vaccine Communications Toolkit ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Frequently Asked Questions ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Presentation COVID-Vaccination 101 ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- CDC's COVID-19
- PSA Videos on COVID-19 Vaccine ([YouTube](#))

2. Share information and resources with your employees on how they can find their spot to take their shot. Employers should also encourage employees to be patient because there is not enough vaccine in North Carolina to vaccinate as many people as want a vaccine in the eligible groups at the beginning.

- [Find My Group](#): Easy to use online tool to help North Carolinians know when they will be eligible to get their vaccine. Find My Vaccine Group walks users through a series of questions to determine which vaccine group they are in. People can also sign up to be notified when their group is active.
- [Find My Spot](#): Easy to use online tool to help individuals find their spot to get a vaccination in NC, including vaccine provider locations and contact information. North Carolinians enter their ZIP code or current location to find nearby vaccine providers. The Find a Vaccine Location tool will be updated regularly with the latest available data. Users should contact vaccine providers directly to confirm availability and schedule appointments.
- NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center: 1-877-490-6642. It's a free call.

3. Offer to work with your local vaccination providers. While vaccine supply is limited, the number of providers that have vaccine will be limited and will primarily be the local health departments, hospital and health systems, and a smaller number of community providers, such as community health centers and federally qualified health centers. Local health departments (LHDs) may reach out to coordinate vaccinations across local enrolled vaccine providers (e.g., hospitals and health systems or community health centers). Our vaccine providers are working very hard to vaccinate as many North Carolinians as quickly as possible, so some vaccine providers may be ready to work with major employers in their jurisdiction to facilitate or host a vaccination events for employees. However, some vaccine providers may ask employers to wait and may not be ready to open to Group 3 at the same time as other providers. Their readiness will depend on available vaccine supply, which can change each week as the state finds out how much vaccine is allocated statewide, and vaccine demand in Groups 1 and 2.

4. Consider what type of vaccination model would work best for the organization and the employees. For example, some large organizations have occupational health programs which may be eligible to enroll directly as a COVID-19 vaccine provider. Others may contract with an enrolled vendor to provide vaccine clinics for the facilities. Many employers will coordinate with their enrolled community vaccine providers to have employees schedule appointments or, in some cases, organize onsite vaccination events for those that have a large workforce and are committed to

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supporting access and efforts to vaccinate their employees. Even if employees are receiving vaccine through a scheduled appointment with an enrolled community provider, employers may still have an opportunity to assist with the employee registration process through an Organization Portal in development as a future release of the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS).

5. Offer reminders and assistance to your employees to get vaccinated.

- a. **Reminders** - Employers can proactively identify their frontline essential workers and alert them that they will be eligible to be vaccinated, while also setting expectations that they may need to wait for an appointment because of limited vaccine supplies.
- b. **Transportation** - If vaccinations are not available at the work site, providing transportation resources to employees can decrease barriers to accessing vaccines. Employers can assist with transportation for employees in the following ways:
 - i. Employers can offer employees transportation to and from vaccine sites.
 - ii. Employers can also share information about local transit authorities that can assist people needing transportation to a vaccination site. Local transit agencies are receiving \$2.5 million in funds to help pay for rides for individuals who need transportation assistance to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. People who need transportation assistance to a COVID-19 vaccine should reach out to their local transit agency (a list of local transit agencies can be found at the [NC DOT website](#)).
- c. **Leave** - Offer paid time off or sick leave to allow employees to get vaccinated and if they have temporary reactions after the vaccine (e.g. fatigue, headache, fever) that makes it hard to work for 24-48 hours after a vaccination. Consider a staggered schedule to avoid multiple employees experiencing temporary reactions at the same time.
- d. **Assistance in scheduling** – Help with the registration process or on-line scheduling (access to Wi-Fi, assistance with translation) to help employees make appointments for vaccinations.

Template Employee Communication

Template Email to Eligible Employees:

To be sent once North Carolina moves to Group 3

Dear <NAME>,

As you may know, the State of North Carolina's COVID-19 Vaccine plan now includes all Frontline Essential Workers in Group 3. Frontline Essential Workers are defined as individuals 1) who work in one of eight essential industry sectors and 2) whose job requires that they work on-site. In your current role at <COMPANY NAME>, we are reaching out to inform you that you qualify as a Frontline Essential Worker and, as such, you are eligible for vaccination in Group 3. However, because vaccine supplies are very limited right now, there may be a wait to schedule your appointment to get your vaccine.

We strongly recommend that you get the vaccine when it is available to you. The COVID-19 vaccine is our best shot to help us all get back control of our lives and back to the people and places we love. The vaccines have been shown to be 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 with no serious safety concerns

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in the clinical trials. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. You may have temporary reactions like a sore arm, headache or feeling tired and achy for a day or two after receiving the vaccine. You will need two shots, 3 to 4 weeks apart from each other, to build up your immunity. You can get your shot at no cost. For your information, we have included some more information about the safety and effectiveness of the two COVID-19 vaccinations (Moderna and Pfizer) that are currently available in the US:

- The vaccines are tested, safe, and effective.
 - More than 70,000 people volunteered in clinical trials for two vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) to see if they are safe and work to prevent COVID illness. Volunteers included Black/African Americans, Hispanic LatinX, Asians and others.
 - To date, the vaccines are 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 with no serious safety concerns noted in the clinical trials.
 - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) makes sure the vaccines are safe and can prevent people from getting COVID-19. Like all drugs, vaccine safety continues to be monitored after they are in use.
- You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.
 - You may have temporary reactions like a sore arm, headache or feeling tired and achy for a day or two after receiving the vaccine.
- The vaccines are free of charge to all North Carolina residents.

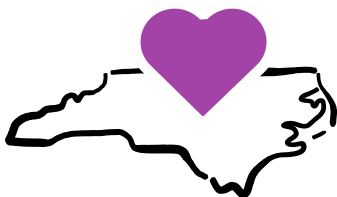
Template Email to Eligible Employees on how to get Vaccinated:

Vaccines are being offered at <insert name of hospital/health system, local health department, community health center that is an enrolled vaccine provider>. Here are your next steps for getting vaccinated:

[Work with your local vaccine provider to determine which of the following options are available to your employees]:

- Go to <insert website> and call one of the local vaccine providers on the list; OR
- Respond to this message indicating your interest in being vaccinated against COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccination team will contact you about when and where you can get vaccinated; OR
- Schedule a vaccination appointment by calling <insert phone number>; OR
- Schedule a vaccination appointment by taking the following steps in your electronic chart <insert instructions>; OR
- Attend walk-in hours at the following times and locations: <insert information>
 - *Note: Plan ahead and be careful when using this option due to the potential for crowded vaccination events or prolonged wait time for elderly patients*

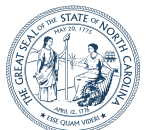
Thank you for your consideration. Please contact <<insert contact person>> with questions or concerns.



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Protect your family and neighbors.**

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